First, the treatments will create a defensible space around the buildings. This space would provide a safe place for crews to work while providing structure protection from an oncoming wild fire.

Second, the treatments will create a survivable space. This space will improve the chances that an undefended building and any occupants would survive an oncoming wildfire.

The third benefit is that this space will help fire fighters prevent a house fire from spreading into the forest, where a fire would threaten forest resources or other nearby buildings.

The summary for types of work that could reduce the risks of building exposures to fire indicates that three types of work are most prominent. Pruning was tallied as a needed treatment 591 times. Thinning was tallied 504 time. Mowing was tallied 243 times. Piling was only noted as a need three times, fuelbreaks as a need three times and chipping as a need was tallied 11 times. A combination of two or three of these treatments was frequently tallied for a given building.

CITY OF BONNERS FERRY SITUATION

There are forest fuels on the periphery, and within the residential areas of Bonners Ferry. In the assessment of wildland fire risk for the city of Bonners Ferry a slightly different approach was used for evaluation than that used in rural Boundary County. The assessment was made on an area basis, rather than on an individual home situation. The same Risk Assessment Form was used, and results were applied to the entire area that had similar conditions.

For that portion of Bonners Ferry south of the Kootenai River, about 60% of the periphery or forested inclusions in residential areas are rated to cause high risk to homes nearby. For that portion of the city north of the Kootenai River, about 34% of the forested periphery or inclusions in residential areas pose high risk to nearby homes.

Thus, our assessment indicates that there is a strong need for treatments of forest fuels in and around the City of Bonners Ferry, in order to reduce the risk of loss of life or valuable property, if a fire occurs in these fuels.

The fuels around the city are more uniform than those in the rural county situation. Only two types of fuel treatment work were tallied in the city situation, pruning and mowing

IGNITION CORRIDORS. In the assessment, a number of corridors where ignition of wildland fuels is likely, were noted.

Two major highways traverse the county. US Highway 95 courses the entire county, south to north. US Highway 2 goes from Three Mile junction to the Montana border. Potential ignitions along these routes include careless smokers and vehicle accidents that might start a fire.

Two major railroads also traverse the county. The Burlington Northern/Santa Fe line enters the county near MacArthur lake follows Deep Creek and exits at the Montana border along the Kootenai River. The Spokane International line enters the county near MacArtur lake and exits at Eastport, following Deep Creek, the Kootenai River and the Moyie River. Possible ignitions include those from hot carbon particles in the diesel exhaust, sparks from wheels hitting track joints, and from derailment accidents.

A Bonneville Power System electric transmission line comes into the county from the Montana line, follows the Kootenai River, then follows Deep Creek south to the county line. Other primary electrical distribution lines extend out from Bonners Ferry to all parts of the urban interface in the county. Major wind events causing live power lines to fall is the primary concern for ignitions. These wind events are often associated with dry cold fronts which hit the county in early to late fall, a time when forest fuels are most easily ignited.

For the most part, all of these ignition corridors are near the zones where the most dense grouping of high risk residences exists.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT AND EDUCATION

As the field assessment phase was occurring, the IFM team was meeting with the various fire departments in Boundary County, the many agencies that have fire protection obligations in the county, agencies that have access to grant funds and the public in general. The purpose of the meetings was to be sure that the various cooperators were aware of our process, and that the public was aware that funds were likely to be available to reduce risk of fire damage to their property.

News articles were encouraged prior to the major public meeting, in hopes that a broad spectrum of home owners in the county would attend and become aware of the county plans. Plans were laid to have a “Fire-Safe” presence at the Boundary County Fair, in order to answer questions and to extend public awareness of this project.

A total of 5 meetings were held. Four of the meetings were primarily with fire departments and interested or cooperating agencies. One meeting was held primarily for the general public. Attendees at each meeting were asked to sign in. Most did sign in, although a few did not.

The meeting format was structured to assure that all attendees were aware of the background nationally, and within the state of Idaho, that has driven the issue of wildland/urban interface fire risk. The relationship of this work Boundary County’s Fire Mitigation Plan to the National Fire Plan was explained.
The process being used by the IFM team was explained, so that those in attendance would gain some knowledge of important factors we were considering. The expected way that fuel-treatment for mitigation of fire risk would be conducted was discussed. Picture examples of fuel mitigation work in Kootenai County were shown.